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**Harris County Purchasing Agent**

**INFORMATION FOR VENDORS**

This information is provided by the Office of the Purchasing Agent to assist vendors and potential vendors interested in doing business with Harris County.

The Harris County Purchasing Agent is responsible for purchases of goods and services for Harris County; Harris County Flood Control District; Harris County Hospital District; Community Health Choice, Inc.; Harris County Toll Road Authority; Community Supervision & Corrections; and Harris County Juvenile Probation.

The Office of the Purchasing Agent is divided into two major divisions: **Purchasing Operations** and **Purchasing Services**.

**PURCHASING OPERATIONS**

Purchasing Operations consists of two groups:

1. Medical, Pharmaceutical, and Technology – Responsible for procurement of medical equipment, supplies and services; pharmaceutical supplies and services; computer and telecommunication hardware, software systems and supplies; various personal and professional service contracts.
2. Industrial/Construction – Responsible for procurement of rolling equipment and supplies, lumber, plumbing, hardware, tools, building services, engineering support, insurance, printing, furniture, service contracts, and construction.

A list of Buyers and associated commodities is provided on the website, <http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/purchasing>, by clicking on “Commodity Codes by Buyer”.

The Purchasing Agent supervises the procurement of products and services necessary to support Harris County and other governmental entities. Most purchases are initiated by a request from an end user. The County has term contracts for goods and services which are utilized on a regular basis. These contracts result from competitive bids and requests for proposals (RFP's) and generally are one year in length with one (1) or more renewal options.

**Informal Quotations**

Purchases of goods and services for \$50,000 or less do not require publication in a newspaper. These purchases are at the discretion of the Buyer and the requirements of the end user. It is the responsibility of the Buyer to obtain adequate information and price quotes to evaluate the

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required products or services as the time frame and workload allow. The buyer may request quotes verbally or in writing. Purchase results may be obtained from the Buyer.

### **Advertised Bids and Requests for Proposals (RFP)**

The County Purchasing Act (Texas Local Government Code, §262.021 *et seq.*), as amended, provides that notice of a proposed purchase exceeding \$50,000 must be published at least once a week in a newspaper of general circulation with the first day of publication being at least 14 days before the date of bid opening. Generally, projects exceeding \$50,000 are advertised in the Houston Chronicle, Friday edition, in the Classified Section under Bids and Proposals.

The advertisement contains a short description of the products or services desired, the job number, the time and date the bids are due and location where the bid documents may be downloaded or picked up. Jobs that are advertised in the newspaper are also posted for public view at the Office of the Harris County Purchasing Agent. Vendors may register on the Harris County Purchasing website to obtain automatic notification of jobs available for bidding.

A bid or RFP package may be obtained by one of the following methods:

1. Go to the Purchasing website, <http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/purchasing>, to register online and click on "Bid Listings". The site has the ability to notify vendors by commodity when an advertised bid/RFP has been placed on the site. Once registered, a password will be assigned to the vendor and bid/RFP documents may be downloaded. Using this system enables a timely review and receipt of bid/RFP documents. Since more than 90 percent of purchasing jobs are downloaded utilizing the purchasing website, vendors must keep their registration data, such as email addresses, current in order to receive timely updates concerning documents they have downloaded.
2. Visit the Purchasing Office and pick up the bid/RFP document.
3. Bid or RFP documents may be mailed to a vendor when the vendor's address is outside the greater Houston area. The Purchasing Office assumes no responsibility as to timely delivery of mailed bid or RFP documents or for any bid/RFP addenda.
4. Some bid or RFP documents, generally for construction projects, may require pickup from an alternate location such as the Engineer's office, Flood Control or Hospital District office.

Various business associations or agencies such as the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce have links to the Purchasing website so their membership can be aware of business opportunities. Proper communication with any agency distributing Harris County bid/RFP information is important to assure timely communication of any addenda to the job specifications.

Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB's) are encouraged to participate in the bid/RFP processes. Although Harris County does not certify HUB vendors, Harris County recognizes the certifications of other governmental entities.

Vendors are encouraged to read bid or RFP information thoroughly before contacting a Buyer with questions. Email is the preferred method of communication with the Purchasing Office regarding bid/RFP documentation. Contact information may also be obtained through the Purchasing website.

Care should be taken when completing the bid/RFP response. Failure to comply with requirements may result in disqualification. Prior to submitting a response, vendors must **verify the bid/RFP Cover Sheet is signed** and all documentation has been completed. If a vendor responds to more than one job, be sure the vendor's response is placed in the envelope marked with the corresponding job number.

Generally, bids and proposals are due by 2:00 p.m. local time in Houston, Texas, on Mondays. Bids are opened shortly thereafter in the conference room behind the Commissioners Court room on the ninth floor of the County Administration Building, 1001 Preston, Houston, Texas 77002. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL LATE BIDS/PROPOSALS BE ACCEPTED.**

Bids are presented to Commissioners Court when in session. Bids received on days when Commissioners Court does not meet are referred for future action. Bids may be awarded, rejected, carried over, or referred (referrals will be reviewed in more detail and placed back on the agenda at a later date). Copies of the bid tabulations are available in Commissioners Court or in the office of the Purchasing Agent. Bids are also available for viewing in the office of the County Clerk and bid tabulations may be viewed on the Purchasing website.

Responses to an RFP are confidential and are opened in the Purchasing Office without public participation. An RFP allows negotiation with those vendors who submit proposals that have a reasonable possibility of obtaining the award. The final negotiated contract may become public upon award and execution of an agreement as described by state law.

It is the policy of the Purchasing Agent to consider total cost when making an evaluation to determine the lowest and best bid/proposal. Total cost evaluations may include items such as quality, durability, and user recommendation/experience with the product or service, past performance and other items as applicable.

Award recommendations are available through the Commissioners Court Agenda published on the Friday preceding the Tuesday Commissioners Court meeting. The Commissioners Court Agenda is posted in various County buildings including the Administration Building and the Family Law Center. It is also available from the Harris County website at [www.hctx.net](http://www.hctx.net).

Recommendation letters submitted to Commissioners Court by this office are copied to all vendors responding to a bid/RFP. County purchasing law allows for a low bidder meeting

specifications who is bypassed for an award the opportunity to appear at Commissioners Court. It is a requirement of the bid/RFP General Requirements that the vendor notify the Purchasing Office prior to appearing in Commissioners Court.

The Purchase Order is the County's official instrument of procurement. Vendors are not authorized to deviate from the instructions set forth in the Purchase Order and invoices must always reference the applicable Purchase Order number.

Commissioners Court has implemented a policy requiring all vendors to be current with the payment of Harris County taxes. Vendors may check the tax status of their company by going to <http://www.hctax.net>. Vendors owing taxes to the County may not be considered for bid award recommendations.

Purchasing Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## **PURCHASING SERVICES**

Purchasing Services has three major functions:

1. Warehousing – Responsible for storage and disposal of surplus and confiscated items, including auction services. Most vehicles and heavy equipment are auctioned by an out-sourced auctioning company. The County also auctions surplus and confiscated property online at <http://www.publicsurplus.com/sms/hctx,tx/browse/home>. Items can be viewed at the Purchasing Services warehouse at 601 Lockwood. For more information, call (713) 368-8800.
2. Recycling – Responsible for operation of the County recycling program, including the sale of recycled commodities such as paper, cardboard, plastic, metals, etc. The County recycling operation has been recognized statewide and nationwide as a leader in the recycling/reuse effort.
3. Inventory – Responsible for maintenance of personal property inventory with a defined unit value of generally \$500 or more. This includes tagging County assets of \$5,000, tracking other inventory items, and inspection of rolling equipment upon receipt. County surplus items are transferred to County departments as applicable.